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Boston University  
Graduate School

Thesis

THE CONTROVERSY OVER MOLIÈRE'S "LE TARTUFFE"

Submitted by

HELEN GREENE HOLLAND

(A.B. Radcliffe, 1923)

In partial fulfillment of requirements for  
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Outline



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# Controversy Over Molière's "Le Tartuffe"

## Introduction

1. Summary of Molière's life and place in literature
2. Review of the play "Le Tartuffe"
- III. Influences which caused Molière to write a play of this type

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## The Controversy over Molière's "Le Tartuffe"

Probably no play in the history of the theatre has given rise to such a storm of criticism and controversy as has "Le Tartuffe" by Molière. This is chiefly because it deals with that question, always so delicate and difficult to handle,--religion. Even to-day authors dealing with subjects touching any particular race or creed, find it impossible to please everyone. In every corner of the world there are readers ready to take offence whether justified or not. So it was in Molière's time. The various religious factions of the seventeenth century arose in arms against this play, which has been called Molière's masterpiece.

Jean Baptiste Poquelin was born at Paris in 1622, the son of a valet-tapisier du Roi. In spite of a good education obtained at the Collège de Cléremont, a Jesuit school, his inclinations led him to the stage. At the age of twenty-one he assumed the name of Molière and founded a theatrical company, L'Illustre Théâtre which met with absolute failure at Paris.

Molière did not despair, however, but took his company into the provinces on a tour which extended over many years and covered all the chief cities of the south of France. The company played the tragedies of Racine and other contemporary writers, as well as the comedies written by their leader. The milestones of the provincial tour were the performance of "L'Etourdi" at Lyons, of which the date is uncertain, being either 1653 or 1655, and of "Le Dépit Amour-



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Jean Baptiste Rousseau was born at Lyons in 1703, the  
son of a valise-maker in the city. In spite of a good edu-  
cation obtained at the College de St. Bernard, a Jesuit school,  
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formances of "Zaire" at Lyons, of which the date is un-  
certain, being either 1723 or 1725, and of "Le Fanal" at



eux" at Béziers in 1656.

Two years later Molière returned to Paris under the patronage of Monsieur, the King's brother. He established a theatre near the Louvre and soon afterward made his first Parisian success with "Les Précieuses Ridicules," a satire on the affectation then prevalent in the salons, particularly L'Hotel de Rambouillet.

Other plays, now considered minor ones, such as "Sganarelle" and "Les Facheux" were favorites with audiences during the next few years.

In 1662 Molière married the leading lady of his company, Armande Béjart and the same year produced the play which acted as the match starting the blaze which grew to a conflagration with Tartuffe. For in ~~the~~ "L'école des Femmes," he first alludes directly to religious matters, thereby arousing a storm of criticism which we will discuss later.

The two years preceding the first presentation of "Tartuffe" saw the production of several plays, among them "La Critique de l'école des Femmes," a reply to hostile criticism, and "La Princesse d'Élide." This latter was given as part of the entertainment at Versailles in 1664 when the first three acts of "Tartuffe" were performed.

During the period of strife over "Tartuffe" Molière did not cease to produce plays. His next was "Don Juan," his famous portrait of the atheist. Four plays follow in a year, the best known of which is "Le Misanthrope" which ranks with "Tartuffe" as one of his masterpieces.



one at Orleans in 1886.

Two years later Molitor returned to Paris under the patronage of Monseigneur, the King's brother. He established a theatre near the Louvre and soon afterwards made his first French success with "Les Femmes d'Alger". A native on the affection then prevalent in the salon, particularly "Hotel de Rohan".

Other plays, now considered "lost", such as "Les Femmes d'Alger" and "Les Femmes d'Alger" were written with assistance during the next few years.

In 1888 Molitor married the leading lady of his company, Madame de la Roche, and the same year produced the play which ended as the author starting the drama which grew to a collaboration with Turgot. For in the "Femmes d'Alger", he first alludes directly to religious matters, thereby arousing a storm of criticism which we will discuss later.

The two years preceding the first presentation of "Les Femmes d'Alger" saw the production of several plays, among them "Les Femmes d'Alger", a reply to hostile criticism, and "Les Femmes d'Alger". This latter was given as part of the entertainment at Versailles in 1884 when the first three acts of "Les Femmes d'Alger" were performed.

During the period of strife over "Les Femmes d'Alger" Molitor did not cease to produce plays. His next was "Les Femmes d'Alger", his last portrait of the artist. Four plays follow in a year, the last known of which is "Les Femmes d'Alger", which ranks with "Les Femmes d'Alger" as one of his masterpieces.



The next year "Tartuffe" reappeared under the title of "l'Imposteur," but was again forbidden, and it was not until two years later that it was played in its present form. Meanwhile this prolific author continued to produce play after play, notable among which were "l'Avare," "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" and "Les Femmes Savantes."

The strife and criticism through which he had passed had sapped the strength and vitality of Molière, and in 1673 when he was playing in "Le Malade Imaginaire," he was taken with a hemorrhage and died a few hours later.

To many minds Molière stands forth as the outstanding genius of the seventeenth century. Some even go further, as does Professor George McLean Harper of Princeton, who says, "There is no other name in French literature at all comparable with that of Molière. He is, in fact, the one world genius which the French race has produced."<sup>(1)</sup>

The great German master, Goethe, says, "I read some pieces of Molière's every year, just as from time to time I contemplate the engravings after the great Italian masters. For we little men are not able to retain the greatness of such things within ourselves."<sup>(2)</sup>

The play, "Le Tartuffe," over which so great a controversy arose, tells of the disturbances caused in the family of a bourgeois, Orgon, by the advent of a religious hypocrite, Tartuffe. It was the custom in France for well-to-do families

1. The French Masters.

2. Dramatic Works of Moliere -- Henri Van Laun.



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to have a sort of spiritual adviser in the home, and it was in this guise that Tartuffe first appeared. Later, as we shall see, his position became less clerical in its nature.

Orgon, the father of the family, and his mother, Madame Pernelle, were completely duped by the rascal, and showered him with favors, Orgon even going so far as to disinherit his own son in Tartuffe's favor. He persists in this attitude in spite of the disapproval of Cléante, his brother, and Dorine, a "servante" who is the embodiment of common sense. The love affair of Marianne, the daughter, with Valère is very nearly ruined by her father's determination to marry her to Tartuffe. It is not till Orgon hears and sees Tartuffe trying to seduce his wife, Elmire, that he realizes the villiany of the man.

But now Tartuffe has the upper hand. Orgon has given him even the house in which the family live. Just at the critical moment, when the family is to be dispossessed, divine Providence intervenes in the person of a servant of the King, brought in by Tartuffe, who after a eulogy of the King,

"dont les yeux se font jour dans les coeurs,  
Et qui ne peut tromper tout l'art des imposteurs,"(1)

takes Tartuffe off to prison.

Although Tartuffe is one of the most conspicuous and widely discussed hypocrites in literature, he is by no means the first. The religious hypocrite has been with us in literature from the very beginning. He plays a leading rôle



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"God has sent you a good man for your country."  
It will be noted that I have not yet mentioned "the king."

Although Tartuffe is one of the most conspicuous and  
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in the fabliaux of the Middle Ages, in the character of intriguing monk or criminal confessor. In *Le Roman de la Rose* by Jean le Meun and Guillaume Lorry, a hypocrite, *Faux-Semblant* by name, outwardly denounces all the vices and sensuality which he secretly practises under cover of an austere, contrite exterior.

Later we find the same repulsive type in the *Satire Menipée* and in the *Macette* of Régnier. Then come the various casuists ridiculed by Pascal in his *Lettres Provinciales*, and finally *Tartuffe*, the culmination and combination of all his predecessors.

All succeeding hypocrites have been judged by the standard of *Tartuffe*. La Bruyère himself points out the differences between his famous hypocrites, *Onuphre*, and *Tartuffe*.

"*Onuphre* ... ne dit point ma haine et ma discipline; au contraire il passerait pour ce qu'il est, un hypocrite, et il ne veut pas passer pour ce qu'il n'est pas, pour un homme dévot.... S'il se trouve bien accueilli d'un homme opulent à qui il a su imposer ... il ne cajole point sa femme ... il est encore plus éloigné de l'employer, pour la flatter, le jargon de dévotion. Ce n'est point par habitude qu'il parle, mais avec dessein et selon qu'il lui est utile et jamais quand il ne servirait qu'à le rendre ridicule. Il ne pense point à profiter de la succession de son ami ni à s'attirer une donation générale de tous ses biens... il ne se joue point à la ligne directe, et il ne s'insinue jamais dans une







famille ou se trouve, à la fois, et une fille à pourvoir et un fils à établir; il y a des droits trop forts et trop inviolables."(1)

At the time when Molière was writing "Le Tartuffe" there was a work by Scarron called "Les Hypocrites", in which the author tells how an adventurer, Montufor, and two adventuresses, Mendez and Hélène, succeeded in imposing upon the inhabitants of Seville through their outward show of devotion.

It is probable that Molière derived some ideas from this work, particularly the reference to visiting the prisons. However, the ideas prevailing in his own time at court and elsewhere must have influenced him far more than any writings. The Church was dominant, and the young King, although frivolous and pleasure-loving, submitted to its authority.

The Queen Mother, Anne of Austria, used every possible means to strengthen the influence of the Church. Therefore, if one wished to be in the good graces of the leaders at court, he must be pious and devout. The result was a great outward display of religious fervor in which self-interest weighed far more heavily than any feeling of true piety. If the following centuries were distinguished by the evils of irreligion and atheism, we may surely say that disfigured, over-done religion was the outstanding evil of the seventeenth century.

In addition to these court conditions, the position of

1. Caractères -- La Bruyère.



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In addition to these court conditions, the position of



the theatre must have influenced Molière to a great degree in the making of the play.

For a long time the Church had tolerated the theatre, but in 1663 there was an upheaval. A party of rigorists sprang up, who denounced the theatre as the cause of the corruption of the century, and called the playwrights "empoisonneurs publics."

Molière saw that the question of whether or not the theatre was dangerous to morals was bound to be brought before the society of the time, and he conceived the idea of a comedy against false religion.

He had long had the reputation of being hostile to religion. In "Sganarelle," one of his earliest plays, a remark put into the mouth of one of the characters, Gorgibus, had aroused violent opposition. Here the religious work, "La Guide des Pêcheurs," by a Spanish Dominican, Luis de Granada, was mentioned in a manner to provoke laughter, as being a more fitting work for a young girl to read than "Clélie."<sup>(1)</sup>

Then came "l'École des Femmes" and the storm of criticism aroused by the sermon on the duties of marriage, and the suggestion of the Ten Commandments in the *Maximes du Mariage*. Molière answered the attacks made on him at the time, by saying that the so-called sermon was not one at all, but a "discours morale." He said that the truly pious who had read

1. Sganarelle, Act I, Sc. I:- "La guide des Pêcheurs est encore un bon livre,  
C'est là qu'en peu de temps on apprend à bien vivre."



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For a long time the Church had tolerated the theatre,

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was mentioned in a manner to excite laughter, as being a

very trifling work for a young girl to read than "Bible."

Then came "L'abbé des Fêtes" and the storm of criticism

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position of the Ten Commandments in the language of marriage.

Holste answered the attack made on him at the time, by

saying that the so-called sermon was not one at all, but a

"poisonous morsel." He said that the truly pious who had read

"L'abbé des Fêtes," Act I, Sc. 1: "L'abbé des Fêtes est

encore un bon livre,

C'est à vous de vous en servir à bien

vivre."



it had found nothing to criticize, and that the religious phraseology was justified by the nature of the character speaking. This flood of empty criticism doubtless aided Molière's decision to make the religious hypocrite the subject of his next play.

The first three acts of "Tartuffe" were played on May 12, 1664, at Versailles before the King, as part of the entertainment called "Les Plaisirs de l'Ile Enchantée." The King seemed to have no objections to the play at the time, but within two days, influenced mainly by the Queen Mother and her followers, he issued an order forbidding further presentation of the play. In the account of the "Plaisirs de l'Ile Enchantée," printed by the court librarian, we read this sentence:

"Quoique la comédie que le sieur Molière avait fait contre les hypocrites eut été trouvée fort divertissante, le Roi connut tant de conformité entre ceux qu'une véritable dévotion met dans le chemin du ciel et ceux qu'une vaine ostentation des bonnes oeuvres n'empêche pas d'en commettre de mauvaises, que son extrême délicatesse ne peut souffrir cette ressemblance du vice avec la vertu qui pouvaient être pris l'une pour l'autre; et quoiqu'on ne doutât point des bonnes intentions de l'auteur, il la défendit pourtant en public et se priva lui-même de ce plaisir pour n'en pas laisser abuser à d'autres moins capables d'en faire le discernement."



it was found nothing to establish, and that the relations  
previously was justified by the nature of the character  
appearing. This kind of a very serious doubt was  
notwithstanding, the decision to have the religious hypothesis the sub-  
ject of his next play.

The first two acts of "L'Amant de l'Amant" were played on May 10,  
1888, at Versailles before the King, as part of the enter-  
tainment called "Les Fêtes de l'Amant de l'Amant". The King  
seemed to have no objections to the play at the time, but  
within two days, and without saying to the Queen Mother and  
her followers, he issued an order forbidding further presen-  
tation of the play. In the account of the "Fêtes de  
l'Amant de l'Amant", printed by the court historian, we read  
this sentence:

"Le digne seigneur qui se trouve dans le rôle de l'Amant de l'Amant  
comme les hypocrites qui ont trouvé fort amusant  
de voir jouer tant de comédies entre eux et les véritables  
dévotion qui dans le monde est chose si rare et si précieuse  
est-ce que les bonnes œuvres n'ont pas à leur côté  
de mérites, que non seulement les hypocrites sont méprisés  
cette méprisance du vice avec la vertu qui conviendrait être  
dans le monde, l'hypocrisie et l'orgueil, on ne doit point les  
bonnes intentions de l'homme, il se doit à lui-même en  
général et de son côté de se plaindre pour leur part  
l'homme d'hypocrisie et d'autres motifs cachés d'en faire le dis-  
cernement."



It is probably this statement to which Molière refers in his first Placet to the King when he says, "Bien que ce m'eût été un coup sensible que la suppression de cet ouvrage, mon malheur pourtant était adouci par la manière dont Votre Majesté s'était expliquée sur ce sujet."

We find the Gazette of May seventeenth of that year praising him for having judged the comedy called the Hypocrite, absolutely injurious to religion and capable of producing very dangerous effects.

One of the chief grounds for condemnation was that religious matters should not be treated of on the stage. Molière expresses himself, on this matter in the Preface to the play, thus: "... ces messieurs tâchent d'insinuer que ce n'est point au theatre à parler de ces mat*ières*; mais je leur demande ... sur quoi ils fondent cette belle maxime.... il ne serait pas difficile de leur faire voir que la comédie chez les anciens a pris son origine de la religion, et faisait partie de leurs mystères.... et que même parmi nous, elle doit sa naissance aux soins d'un confrérie à qui appartient encore aujourd'hui l'Hôtel de Burgogne, que c'est un lieu qui fut donné pour y représenter les plus importantes de notre foi.... que l'on a joué de notre temps des pièces saintes de M. de Corneille<sup>(1)</sup> qui ont été l'admiration de toute la France."

Molière let no opportunity of pleading his cause pass him  
1. "Polyeucte" and "Théodore".



It is probably this statement to which Molière refers in his first speech to the king when he says, "Mais que ce n'est être un bon comédien que la connaissance de son art, non, vraiment, c'est d'être comédien par la manière dont vous saluez l'abbé qui explique sur ce sujet."

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One of the chief grounds for condemnation was that religious matters should not be treated of on the stage. Molière excuses himself, on this matter in the preface to the play, thus: "... ces messieurs s'étonnent d'insinuer que ce n'est point au théâtre à parler de ces matières; mais je leur demande... sur quel ils fondent cette belle maxime... si ne serait pas l'utilité de leur faire voir que la comédie chez les anciens a été son origine de la religion, et l'absence de leurs tyrannies... et que même par là même, elle doit se méprendre aux soins d'un comédien à qui appartient encore aujourd'hui l'hôtel de Bourgois, que c'est un lieu qui est donné pour y représenter les plus importantes de notre foi... que l'on a joué de notre temps des pièces saintes de M. de Corneille (?) qui ont été l'admiration de toute la France."

Molière let no opportunity of pleading his cause pass him I. Polytechnic and Theobald.



by. During a stay at Fontainebleau, whither he had been summoned to aid in the entertainment of Cardinal Chigi, the legate sent by the Pope to make full reparation for an insult to the French ambassador at Rome in 1662, Molière received permission to read the forbidden play before that eminent clergyman. We do not know the exact opinion, but we gather that it was not unfavorable, for Molière says in his first Placet, "Votre Majesté a beau dire et M. le légat et MM. les prélats ont beau donner leur jugement, ma comédie est diabolique... je suis un démon. Les rois éclairés comme vous n'ont pas besoin qu'on leur marque si qu'on souhaite; ils voient comme Dieu ce qu'ils nous doivent accorder."

In spite of, or more likely because of, the fact that the play was forbidden, everyone wished to see it or hear it read. Molière was in great demand at the homes of the nobility. Boileau says in his third satire,

"Molière avec Tartuffe doit y jouer son rôle," and adds in a note, "'Le Tartuffe' en ce temps là avait été défendu, et tout le monde voulait avoir Molière pour le lui entendre reciter." In fact, a reading of "Tartuffe" was the greatest treat a host could prepare for a gathering of society people.

Princes and members of the royal family, of course, did not consider that the ban applied to them. Three months after the first performance, Molière gave the first three acts at Villiers-Cotterets, at the home of Monsieur, the King's brother, his former patron.<sup>(1)</sup>

1. September 25, 1664.



... I think a copy of Montaigne's, which he had been given  
before to him in the library of Cardinal de Richelieu, the  
library sent by the Pope to make this reputation for an artist  
to the French ambassador at Rome in 1602, Molière received  
permission to read the Frenchman's play before that eminent  
clergymen. We do not know the exact opinion, but we gather  
that it was not unfavorable. The Molière says in his first  
letter, "Vosre Excellence a bien voulu de M. le Cardinal de Richelieu  
présenter au grand dîner leur jugement, et comme est digne  
d'être... de cette manière. Les trois écrivains comme vous  
n'ont pas hésité à en faire un grand usage et en ont écrit  
voilà comme il en est de la plus haute autorité."  
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brother, his former patron.



In November of the same year we find in the "Régistre" of La Grange, who was Molière's lieutenant, an account of the first performance of the entire five acts. He says, "Le 29 novembre la troupe est allée au Raincy, maison de Mme. la Princesse Palatine près Paris par ordre de Mgr. le prince de Condé, pour y jouer "Tartuffe" en cinq actes." (1) The edition of Molière's works brought out in 1682 mentions the above date and also a performance on November eighth of the following year.

In the summer of 1667, while Louis XIV was engaged in his campaigns in Flanders, Molière produced Tartuffe with certain changes which he thought would eliminate all causes of offense. He changed the title of the play to "L'Impos-  
teur" and made Tartuffe over into a layman by the name of Panulphe. Great care was taken to have him dressed in the manner of fashionable gentlemen of the day, with a small hat, long hair, a ruff, a sword and a lace-bedecked suit.

The performance took place on August fifth, and the next day the play was forbidden by Monsieur de Lamoignon, the President of Parliament. An anecdote written by the Princess Palatine in a letter to a friend recounts the ingenious way in which Molière made a laughing-stock of the President when he announced the ban on his play. He told the audience that his company had expected to have the honor of presenting "Le Tartuffe" but "M. le Président a défendu "le Tartuffe," il ne veut plus qu'on le joue." This speech







caused much laughter and comment on account of M. de Lam-  
oignan's reputation for hypocrisy.

In a mighty effort to get the prohibition removed from  
his play Molière went, himself, to the President to plead his  
cause. The interview as reported by Boileau <sup>(1)</sup> was not  
successful, the minister replying as follows:—"Monsieur je  
fais beaucoup de cas de votre mérite; je sais que vous êtes  
non seulement un acteur excellent, mais encore un très habile  
homme qui faites honneur à votre profession et à la France.  
Cependant, avec toute la bonne volonté que j'ai pour vous,  
je ne saurais vous permettre de jouer votre comédie. Je suis  
persuadé qu'elle est fort belle et fort instructive, mais il  
ne conviens pas à des comédiens d'instruire les hommes sur  
les matières de la morale chrétienne et de la religion: ce  
n'est pas au théâtre de se mêler de prêcher l'Évangile.  
Quand le roi sera de retour il vous permettra s'il le trouve  
à propos, de représenter Le Tartuffe; mais, pour moi je croir-  
ais abuser l'autorité que le roi m'a fait l'honneur de me  
confier pendant son absence si je vous accordais la permis-  
sion que vous me demandez."

Molière tried to explain to the Minister that his comedy  
was entirely innocent and harmless, especially in its re-  
vised form; but that gentleman was not to be moved from his  
decision, and finally closed the interview with these words:  
"Monsieur, vous voyez qu'il est près de midi; je manquerais  
la messe si je m'arrétais plus longtemps."

1. Quoted by Brosette. Despois et Mesnard ed. Moliere  
v.4, p. 318.



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persuadé qu'elle est fort belle en fait littéraire, mais il  
ne convient pas à des comédiens d'insultes les hommes sur  
les matières de la morale chrétienne et de la religion. Je  
suis sûr au théâtre de ne mériter de chercher l'Évangile.  
Lorsqu'il s'agit de votre comédie s'il se trouve  
à propos, de représenter la Tartuffe; mais, pour moi je trou-  
ve que l'autorité que je lui ai fait l'honneur de me  
confier pendant son absence et je vous accorde la permis-  
sion que vous me demandez."

Kollins tried to explain to the Minister that his comedy  
was entirely innocent and harmless, especially in its re-  
vised form; but that gentleman was not to be moved from his  
decision, and finally closed the interview with these words:  
"Monseigneur, vous voyez qu'il est près de midi; je m'en vais  
à messe et je m'en reviens plus longtemps."

1. Quoted by Prosélyte. Despois et Beaumard ed. Kollins  
v. 4, p. 518.



These closing words are significant because of their resemblance to those spoken by Tartuffe when he is trying to escape the annoying questions of Cleante and says<sup>(1)</sup>

"Il est, Monsieur, trois heures et demie

Certain devoir pieux me demande la haut

Et vous m'excuserez de vous quitter si tôt."

People have said that Molière inserted the above words after the interview, in order to take vengeance upon M. le Président, but we know from a document called La Lettre sur la Comédie de l'Imposteur that the lines existed in the edition of August 1667. As the interview did not take place until later, the similarity proves to be only a coincidence.

Soon afterward La Thorillière and La Grange, two of Molière's most trustworthy actors, departed for Lille to present to the King the second Placet, in which the author tells how he has changed the play, carefully avoiding any suspicion of the clerical in Tartuffe's manner or dress. He complains that all this has been to no purpose. His comedy is still violently attacked. He also scores the "tartuffes" of society who condemn the play because in it they see their own faults exposed.

The mission to Lille was no more successful than the visit to the President. The King promised to look into the matter upon his return, but would take no immediate action.

After the performance of August 5 Hardouin, the Bishop of Paris, published a special ordinance in which he said that Tartuffe was "<sup>(2)</sup>une comédie très dangereuse et

1. Act V, Sc.1.

2. Histoire de la vie et des Ouvrages de Molière.  
J.A.Taschereau--Paris, 1825.



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resemblance to those spoken by Bartlett when he is  
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1. That V. de  
2. That the is the  
3. That the is the



qui est d'autant plus capable de nuire à la religion que, sous prétexte de condamner l'hypocrisie ou la fausse dévotion elle donne lieu d'en accuser indifféremment tous ceux qui font profession de la plus solide piété, et les exposer par ce moyen aux railleries et aux calomnies continuelles des libertins; de sorte que pour arrêter le cours d'un si grand mal--- notredit promoteur nous aurait requis de faire défense à toute personne de notre diocèse de représenter, sous quelque nom que ce soit, la susdite comédie, de la lire ou entendre réciter, soit en public, soit en particulière sous peine d'excommunication...."

A week later appeared La Lettre sur la Comédie de l'Imposteur which we have already mentioned. This document was published anonymously, but several authors, notably Messieurs Grosely, Simonin, and Taschereau, attribute it to Molière himself. Their theory is based for the most part upon the fact that an extract is quoted from the play, which had not yet been printed. This would indicate a familiarity with the text which no one but Molière would be likely to have.

As a matter of fact, the words of the play are not quoted exactly, but the general idea is correctly conveyed. It seems probable that the author saw the play just once, at the only public performance.

In any case, it is certain that the author sympathizes with Molière and approves of the play. The letter is divided into two parts, the first being a review of the plot, and the second being comments or "considérations" on the



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 son texte de condenser l'hypothèse de la faiblesse  
 viciée elle-même l'ait d'un accent indifférent à la  
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 par ce moyen aux relations et aux calomnies  
 des libéraux: de sorte que pour éviter le cours d'un  
 grand mal--... n'importe quel moyen de la faire  
 décrire à toute personne de notre classe de respect  
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A week later appeared in the same paper the following  
 notice which we have already mentioned. This document  
 was published anonymously, but several authors, notably  
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 with Voltaire and approval of the play. The letter is  
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 and the second being comments on "consolidation" of the



controversies which the play aroused. The author claims that it is perfectly legitimate to portray religious matters on the stage, for religion may always be used with propriety to preach the truth in any form.

His second "considération" is a eulogy of Molière for having struck a blow at gallantry through the ridiculousness of Tartuffe's affair with Elmire. He says<sup>(1)</sup>

"La ridicule est, donc, la forme extérieure et sensible que la providence de la nature a attachée à tout ce qui est déraisonnable pour nous en faire apercevoir et nous obliger à le fuir. Pour connaître ce ridicule il faut connaître la raison dont il signifie le défaut et voir en quoi elle consiste."

During the next two years there are definite records of only two performances of "Le Tartuffe," one at Chatilly, the home of le Grand Condé and another at Paris on the fourth of March, 1668.

Finally at the most brilliant period of the reign of Louis XIV, on the fifth of February, 1669, "Le Tartuffe" appeared by permission at the Palais Royal in its original form. The people stormed the theatre to see this play, so long forbidden. We find a very complimentary review of the play in the Gazette of February ninth, which concludes thus:

"Ce Molière par sa pinceau

En a fait le parlant tableau

Avec tant d'art, tant de justesse

Et bref tant de délicatesse







Qu'il charme tous les vrais dévots,  
 Comme il fait enrager les faux.  
 Et les caractères au reste  
 C'est une chose manifeste,  
 Sont tous si bien distribués  
 Et naturellement jouées  
 Que jamais nulle comédie  
 Ne fut aussi tout applaudie."

Religion has always been a cause of controversy in France, but in the reign of Louis XIV feeling ran especially high. There were three distinct parties struggling for supremacy.

The Jesuits held the highest positions at court at the time when Molière wrote "Le Tartuffe." These men, members of the Society of Jesus, were reputed to practise doctrines of casuistry and equivocation. The credit of recognizing education as a social force and of applying it to definite ends belongs to the Jesuits. Since these ends did not always correspond to the ideas of the other factions, the Jesuits were severely attacked and condemned.

Their most powerful opponents were the Jansenists, followers of Cornelius Jansen, who formed a semi-clerical organization with headquarters at Port Royal. Pascal, a member of this community famous for its austerity and prudery, makes a bitter attack upon the casuistry of the Jesuits.

The third faction was a secret society called "La Compagnie du Saint Sacrement," familiarly known to the society of the time as "La Cabale des Dévots" or simply "La Cabale.



It is clear that the first device,

was to put the subject in a position

of being a witness to the

fact that the subject was

not a witness to the fact

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The Cabale originated in the sixteenth century but did not grow to be especially influential until the seventeenth.

At this time the leaders were ~~le~~ Comte d'Albion and le Marquis de Fénélon. The members of the Cabale fought continually against any manifestations of impiety, and their special abominations were duels and immodesty in dress. According to le Père Rapin <sup>(1)</sup> the Compagnie consisted of "des personnes de qualité qui vivant dans le siècle voulurent imiter sa vertu (M. de Rentie un des chefs de la Compagnie du Saint Sacrement) et ce fut sur ce modèle que la secte des dévots qui fit depuis tant de bruit, se forma, dont le marquis de Fénélon, le comte de Brocas, le marquis de Saint Mesme, le comte d'Albion, tous personnes de qualité de la cour furent les chefs, lesquels commencèrent a se liguier pour exterminer les duels --- et pour détruire le blasphème parmi les gens de Qualité."

He goes on to say that their affectations and exaggerated piety made them suspected by the King, "lequel pour les décrier les fit jouer quelques années après, sur le théâtre par Molière."

Right here an interesting question arises as to whether or not the King approved of the play. Several authors including the one just quoted claim that he did approve. One, Louis Lacour, even wrote a book on the subject, the title of which goes far to explain its content. It is "Le Tartuffe par Ordre de Louis Quatorze." In this work he claims that Louis had Molière write the play to ridicule the Jansenists whose prudery and austerity were not in accord with his pleasure-loving tastes.

1. Quoted by M. Allier in *La Cabale des Dévots*







(1)

Brossette says in his correspondence with Boileau  
 "Cette piece plût à Sa Majesté qui en parla trop avanta-  
 geusement pour ne pas irriter la jalousie des ennemis de  
 Molière et surtout la cabale des dévots."

In the first Placet, presented to the King in 1664, we  
 find Molière reminding his Majesty that "il avait eu la bon-  
 té de declarer qu'il ne trouvait rien à dire" after the per-  
 formance at Versailles.

There are also those who state positively that the King  
 did not approve. One is Pierre Roullé, the bitter enemy of  
 Molière, who in his book "le Roi Glorieux au Monde" writes an  
 extravagant eulogy of Louis XIV. In one part of the book  
 he tells of the King's sojourn at Fontainbleau, but, he says,  
 "Il n'y est allé qu'après une action héroïque et royal, véri-  
 tablement digne de la grandeur de son coeur et de sa pieté  
 et du respect qu'il a pour Dieu et pour l'Eglise." He then  
 hurls at Molière a volley of bitter invective, calling him  
 "un homme, ou plutôt un démon vetu de chair et habillé en  
 homme, et le plus signale impie et libertin qui fut jamais  
 dans les siècles passés, (qui) avait eu assez d'impiété et  
 d'abominations pour faire sortir de son esprit diabolique  
 une pièce toute prête d'être rendue publique, en la faisant  
 monter sur le théâtre à la diversion de toute l'Eglise, et  
 au mépris du caractère le plus sacré et de la fonction la  
 plus divine, et au mépris de ce qu'il y a de plus saint dans  
 l'Eglise---il méritait par cette attentat sacrilège et im-  
 pie un dernier supplice exemplaire et public et le feu même,







avant-coureur de celui de l'enfer, pour expier un crime si gros de lèse majesté divine." Roullé concludes thus "Sa Majesté après lui avoir fait un sévère reproche anime d'un juste colère... lui a ordonné sur peine de la vie, d'en supprimer et déchirer, étouffer et brûler, tout ce qui en était fait, et de ne plus rien faire à l'avenir, de si indigne et infamant...de si injurieux à Dieu et outrageant l'Église."

Nothing could be more contrary to known facts than the command of the King to burn the play. On account of the obvious exaggeration we are inclined to doubt the sincerity of the author.

The other note claiming that the King did not approve is in the Gazette of May 17, 1664, which praises "le fils aîné de l'Église pour avoir jugé la pièce de théâtre intitulée l'Hypocrite absolument injurieuse à la religion et capable de produire de très dangereux effets.

(1)  
On this point Bazin says "Il y avait alors un parti religieux sévère, et persecuté partout disposé à la censure des règlements joyeux de la cour. Le Roi qui donnait en effet l'exemple de désordre et à qui le parti était suspect par les anciennes relations avec les chefs de la Fronde ne pouvait que trouver bon qu'on se moquât aussi ce cabale austère qui l'importunait et il ne vit certainement autre chose dans Tartuffe qu'une reprisaille de la cour contre la dévotion chagrine, rigoureuse, sans complaisance pour les faiblesses."



avant-cour de celui de l'empereur, pour servir au crime et  
gras de l'âme majesté divine. "Les lois sont faites pour  
l'empereur et non l'empereur pour les lois. C'est en son  
juste empire... L'empereur est le maître de la vie, de la mort,  
du bien et du mal, de l'honneur et de l'ignominie, tout ce qui est  
fait, et ce qui n'est pas fait, et l'empereur, de si indigne et  
infamant... de si infamant à l'empereur et outrageant l'empereur."

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as in the battle of May 14, 1381, with protest "in the king  
of England pour avoir jugé la place de l'empereur indigne  
l'empereur absolument indigne à la religion et capable  
de produire de tels dangers effroyables."

(1)  
On this point Bavin says "Il y avait alors un parti  
religieux sévère, et persécuté par l'empereur à la renverse  
des règlements de la cour. Le roi qui connaît en  
effet l'empereur de l'empire et le roi le parti était suspect  
par les anciennes relations avec les chefs de la France ne  
pouvait que trouver bon qu'on se moquât ainsi de ce parti sus-  
cité qui l'importunait et il ne vit certainement aucune chose  
dans cette dénonciation de la cour contre la dévo-  
tion évangélique, rigoureuse, sans complaisance pour les lai-  
cises."



Whether the King approved or not, so skilfully did Molière portray the true hypocrite that each of the religious factions interpreted the play as a direct attack upon it, and Molière was overwhelmed with criticism.

First of all, people determined he was attacking the Jesuits. This theory is based on and, according to his critics, supported by two passages in the play which would seem to indicate that Molière at least had the Jesuits in mind when writing. The first of these occurs when Tartuffe is explaining to Elmire how he can reconcile his illicit love for her with his devotion. He says <sup>(1)</sup>

"Selon divers besoins il est une science  
D'étendre les liens de notre conscience  
Et de rectifier le mal de l'action  
Avec la pureté de notre intention."

These words are almost identical with those used by Pascal in the seventh Provincial, "Quand nous ne pouvons pas empêcher l'action nous purifions au moins l'intention; et ainsi nous corrigeons le vice du moyen, par la pureté de la fin."

The other passage which has been construed as an attack on the Jesuits is spoken when Orgon tells why he entrusted the casket to Tartuffe. He says, <sup>(2)</sup> "Ce fut par un motif de cas de conscience."

Both of these passages reminded the people of the Jesuit doctrines of mental restriction and equivocation. According to Saint Beuve, "Tartuffe resume toute la maïlle et tout l'él-ixir du casuisme accordant."

1. Act IV, Sc. 5.

2. Act V, Sc. 2







The year 1664 marked an epoch when the Jansenists, fortified by the support of eminent people at court, were using all their influence to enforce their doctrines, inimical to those promoted by the Jesuits. Immediately after the first performance of "Tartuffe" the society of Port Royal began to fight to prevent further representations of the play on the ground that it was a direct attack upon them.

The main ground for this contention was that the position of Tartuffe in Orgon's family and his semi-clerical garb were very suggestive of the austere company at Port Royal. They also considered that Molière was attacking some of their leaders as we shall see later. Even when Molière changed Tartuffe to Pamulphe, a layman, carefully avoiding any semblance of clerical costume, the Jansenists persisted in their attacks upon him, saying that the comedy was injurious to true religion.

This last was the charge also emphasized by the third faction La Cabale des Dévots.

(1)

M. Raoul Allier in his book "La Cabale des Dévots" claims that the play is a direct attack upon the Compagnie du Saint Sacrement. He bases his claim upon two factors; Molière's reasons for having a grudge against the Cabale, and certain passages in the play.

In the days when Molière had his headquarters in the Parish of Saint Sulpice, the abbé Olier and his followers, in league with certain of the dévots, exerted their influence against Molière, to such an extent that his theatre was practically empty at every performance.



The year 1854 marked an epoch when the Jansenists, long-  
lived by the support of eminent people at court, were being  
all their influence to enforce their doctrines, intended to  
those promoted by the Jesuits. Immediately after the first  
performance of "Tartuffe" the society of Port Royal began to  
fight to prevent further representations of the play on the  
ground that it was a direct attack upon them.

The main ground for this contention was that the posi-  
tion of Tartuffe as Orgon's father and his as a clerical garb  
were very suggestive of the society company at Port Royal.  
They also considered that Molière was attacking some of their  
doctrines as we shall see later. Even when Molière changed  
Tartuffe to a lawyer, a layman, carefully avoiding any men-  
tion of clerical costume, the Jansenists persisted in their  
attacks upon him, saying that the comedy was injurious to  
the religion.

This last was the charge also emphasized by the third  
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In the days when Molière had his headquarters in the  
Palais of Saint-Louis, the abbé Olier and his followers, in  
league with certain of the Dévots, exerted their influence  
against Molière, to such an extent that his theatre was prac-  
tically empty at every performance.



Another grievance which M. Allier thinks Molière had against the devots was the change which they brought about in his relationship with the Prince de Conti. Molière had come to know Conti at the Collège de Cléremont. Later the prince became very much interested in his troupe and was generally known as Molière's patron. At this time Conti was living a life of dissipation and luxury. In 1656 he became converted and turned violently against the stage, particularly against comedy. Of course Molière lost favor, and his fortunes suffered in consequence.

These reasons alone would be sufficient, according to M. Allier, to indicate that Molière was attacking les dévots, but in addition there are passages in the play which to his mind clinch the matter.

There is a constant tendency on the part of the author to bring in references to the works of the Cabalé. For example, the very first time Tartuffe comes upon the stage he pauses to give directions to his servant without.<sup>(1)</sup>

"Si l'on vient pour me voir, je vais

aux prisonniers

Des aumônes que j'ai partagés les  
derniers"

Then he makes a famous "geste". He hands a handkerchief to Dorine and asks her to cover her neck which seems to him immodestly exposed.

The people of the cabale were famous for their visiting of the prisons and, as we have said, above all abominations they denounced immodesty in dress. For years they tried to



Another advantage which M. Miller finds Molière has

against the comic is the change which they brought about

in the relationship with the public of Molière.

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to bring in references to the works of the *dévot*. For ex-

ample, the very first time Tartuffe comes upon the stage he

pauses to give directions to his servant without.

"Alors, mon valet, va vite, va vite."

and afterwards

"Alors, mon valet, va vite, va vite."

and so on.

Then he takes a famous "gros". He hands a handkerchief to

Marine and asks her to cover her neck which seems to him in-

decently exposed.

The people of the *cabaret* were famous for their visiting

of the prisons and, as we have said, show all attentions

they bestowed liberally in prison. For when they tried to

...



get laws preventing it and were aided in their efforts by the Queen Mother.

(1)

Later in the play Orgon says

"Je vois qu'il reprend tout et qu'à ma  
femme même

Il prend pour mon honneur un intérêt  
extrême

Il m'avertit des gens qui lui font les  
yeux doux,

Et plus que moi six fois, il s'en  
montre jaloux."

In this speech he expresses one of the most common complaints against la Compagnie. As Guy Patin puts it, "Ils mettaient le nez dans le gouvernement des grandes maisons, ils avertissaient les maris de quelques débauches de leurs femmes."

M. Allier's contention is further supported by Cléante's  
(2)  
tirade against the falsely devout.

"Ces gens qui par une âme à l'intérêt soumise  
Font de dévotion métier et marchandise  
Et veulent acheter credit et dignités  
A prix de faux clins d'yeux et d'élans affectés.

-----  
Qui brûlants et priants demande chaque jour  
Et prêche la retraite au milieu de la cour."

Then he utters the significant words which have been taken as a direct sign-post pointing to the Cabale. In speaking of the truly pious he says,

1. *Act V. 2. 3*
2. Act I, Sc. 6







"Point de cabale en eux, point d'intrigues  
à suivre

On les voit pour tous soins se mêler  
de bien vivre."<sup>(1)</sup>

M. Allier claims that here, in one scene Molière brings together and summarizes the struggle of Louis XIV against the Cabale des Dévots.

When the first three acts were played on May 12, 1664, at Versailles, la Compagnie "parla fort de travailler à procurer la suppression de la méchante comédie Tartuffe. Chacun se chargea d'en parler à ses amis qui avaient quelque crédit à la cour pour empêcher sa représentation."

Their most strong objection was, as in the case of the Jansenists, that Molière was attacking true religion.

Molière, himself, though not a religious man was by no means impious. His code of morals was "la morale des honnêtes gens" of which Saint Beuve gives an excellent description.<sup>(2)</sup>

"Morality of honest people is--composed of good habits, good manners and honest proceedings; resting generally on a foundation, more or less well-born.--- There enter into it some philosophical results; and there remain some Christian maxims and habits; it is a compromise and therefore answers the wants of the day. What there is good in it--- is a Christianity rationalized, or rather made useful; transformed to a state of practical social utility."

1. Act I, Sc. 6

2. Trans. by Rev. E. M. Kirk in Louis XIV and the Writers of his Age- from French of J. F. Astrie- Boston, 1855.







In any case the only safe conclusion to draw is that excesses of all kinds were distasteful to Molière and aroused in him great indignation.

The play arouses the antipathy of true piety because both Orgon and Mme. Pernelle are sincere, pious persons who become the dupes of their own religious zeal as much as of the machinations of Tartuffe.

Orgon, a fool, without judgment, who allows himself to be completely duped by the rascally hypocrite, represents the true dévot in opposition to the false Tartuffe. When he comes to his senses he completely changes and says<sup>(1)</sup>

"C'en est fait, je renonce à tous les gens  
de bien

J'en aurais désormais une haine effroyable,

Et m'en vais devenir pour eux pire qu'un diable,"

Is this, they ask, the proper sort of character to revive true devotion in the esteem of the spectators?

The dévots did not consider the reproach of Cléante, which follows, sufficiently strong to counter-balance the evil in Orgon's speech. They considered Tartuffe a hidden masked enemy of religion, capable of causing the faithful to doubt the sincerity of all persons occupying a semi-spiritual position similar to his in any household, thus undermining the influence of the Church.

The critics were not content to accuse Molière of attacking a body of men. They even charged him with portraying individuals in the character of Tartuffe.

1. Act. V, Sc 1.







The name most often mentioned in this connection is that of Gabriel Roquette, Bishop of Autun.

(1)  
L'abbé de Choisy in his Memoires says "L'abbé Roquette avait tous les caractères que l'auteur du Tartuffe a si parfaitement représentés sur le modèle d'un homme faux."

This theory is based, for the most part, upon a similarity between the affair of Elmire and Tartuffe and one which the abbé Roquette is reported to have carried on with the Duchess of Longueville. In a letter to Brosette, J. B. Rousseau says he has heard that "l'aventure de Tartuffe s'est passée chez la Duchesse de Longueville," and has concluded that "l'abbé Roquette qui fréquentait beaucoup cette belle et gallante princesse pourrait avoir été l'héros de l'aventure et alors la Duchesse y aurait joué la rôle d'Elmire."

Others claim that Tartuffe is a portrait of Péréfix, Bishop of Rhodéz, basing their claim upon the anecdote which attributes to Louis XIV the famous expression "le pauvre homme" (2)

One day when Louis was about to sit down to dine he advised Péréfixe to do likewise. The bishop replied that since it was a day of fasting he would take only a light repast. Someone smiled, and after Rhodéz had gone, the King inquired the reason. The person replied that the King need not worry about M. de Rhodéz and proceeded to recount what he had seen the prelate eat at a recent dinner. At each new dish the King exclaimed, "Le pauvre homme!" varying his inflection in a joking manner. It is said that Molière was present at

1. *Quoted in Despois and Mesnard*

2.



The name most often mentioned in this connection is that  
of Gabriel Roguet, Bishop of Amiens.  
I have to confess in his memoirs says 'Gabriel Roguet  
avait une fois écrit au pape à propos de l'abbé de  
l'abbaye de Saint-Denis qu'il était un homme sans  
cœur, et que son cœur était dans son chapeau.'  
This theory is based, for the most part, upon a similarity  
between the style of writing and the style and the which  
the abbé Roguet is reported to have carried on with the  
Bishop of Amiens. In a letter to the Bishop of Amiens  
Roguet says he has heard that 'l'abbé de Saint-Denis a été  
managé pour la messe de Longueville,' and has concluded  
that 'l'abbé Roguet est l'équivalent de beaucoup d'autres  
et d'ailleurs pour avoir été l'abbé de Saint-Denis  
on est sûr qu'il n'est pas un homme sans cœur.'  
Others claim that Roguet is a portrait of Réné,  
Bishop of Amiens, being their claim upon the anecdote which  
relates to him that the famous expression 'le pape  
avait son cœur dans son chapeau' was his.  
(2)  
The day when Louis was about to sit down to dine he ad-  
vised Roguet to be likewise. The Bishop replied that since  
it was a day of fasting he would take only a light repast.  
Someone asked, and after Roguet had gone, the king answered  
the remark. The remark replied that the king need not  
worry about it. Roguet and proceeded to recount what he had  
seen the priest eat at a recent dinner. At each new dish  
the king exclaimed, 'le pape mange!' saying the inflection  
in a joking manner. It is said that Roguet was present

*Journal de Louis XIV*



the time and incorporated the phrase into his play.

Another individual whom the cap seemed to fit was the Marquis de Fénélon, one of the leaders of La Compagnie du Saint Sacrement. M. Allier quotes an anonymous author as saying "Quand le Tartuffe parut on dit à l'auteur qu'il aurait bien mieux fait de donner une épée qu'une soutane à son faux dévot, on voulait indiquer M. de Fénélon."

Tartuffe was not the only character thought to have an original in real life. We have already seen how people saw in Elmire a resemblance to the Duchess of Longueville. Dorine, in the first act, speaks of Oronte, "p<sup>r</sup>ude à son corps défendant", one of those

" Qui ne saurait souffrir qu'une autre  
ait les plaisirs  
Dont le penchant de l'âge a sevré  
<sup>(1)</sup>  
leurs desirs"

Aimé-Martin, an eminent critic, asserts that under these features is portrayed the Duchess of Navailles, ambitious, prudish and devout, who censured everything at court. The younger court element had been very much interested in the intrigues of this woman and of Mme. de Soissons, supposedly recognized as the "Daphne, votre voisine" of the play.

If we are to believe what Molière himself says, all these fine theories collapse. Again and again he repeats that his play was intended to portray manners and not individuals. It was destined to act as a curative of a vice particularly prevalent in his day.

In the preface to the play he says;

1. Act I, Sc. 1.







"Si l'on prend la peine d'examiner de bon foi ma comédie on verra sans doute que mes intentions y sont partout innocentes et qu'elle ne tend nullement à jouer les choses que l'on doit reverer--- et que j'ai mis tous l'art et tous les soins qu'il m'a été possible pour bien distinguer le personnage de l'hypocrite d'avec celui du vrai dévot."

He closes his preface with the opinion of le Grand Condé who, a week after the prohibition of "Tartuffe", was asked by the King why people were scandalized by "Le Tartuffe" and received "Scaramouche", a much more immoral and indecent play, with favor. Condé replied that it was because "Scaramouche" mocked at heaven and religion for which these men do not care, but the comedy of Molière ridiculed them, themselves, and that is what they could not stand.

In the placets to the King, Molière reiterates the statement that his comedy was not intended to give offense to anyone and complains in almost the same words as Condé that other plays have been permitted which were much worse. He insists that if the business of comedy is to correct the faults of men by ridiculing them, there should be no privileged comedians.

Molière had some very ardent partisans as well as bitter enemies.

Early in the controversy Boileau, in his Discours au Roi, wrote:

"Cé sont eux que l'on voit d'un discours  
insensé

Publier dans Paris que tout est renversé







De jouer des bigots la trompeuse grimace,  
Pour eux un tel ouvrage est un monstre odieux  
C'est offenser les lois, c'est attaquer

aux cieux

Mais bien que d'un faux zèle ils masquent  
leur faiblesse

Chacun voit qu'en effet la vérité les blesse  
En vain d'un lâche orgueil leur esprit revêtu  
Se couvre du manteau d'une austère vertu  
Leur coeur qui se connaît et qui fuit la lumière  
S'il se moque de Dieu craint Tartuffe et Molière."







ad vos in vestamentis ovium, intrensicus autem sunt lupi<sup>(1)</sup>  
rapaces."

To him sincere religion which is blind or poorly understood is equal in standing with false devotion. He attacks the prudish woman who censures all pleasure, having in mind the Mme. Pernelle of Molière's play. Then he scores the blind, foolish Orgons of the world, and finally the "dévot intéressé" as he calls him, whose only motive for piety is self interest. A character of this type, says Bourdaloue, is capable of anything. Beware of him!

Even up to recent times arguments are being brought forward to prove one or another of the theories regarding the play. Two authors in particular of our own day, Raoul Allier<sup>(2)</sup> and Francis Boumal<sup>(3)</sup> uphold the cause of La Cabale des Dévots.

More and more, however, the controversy is fading into the background, before the greatness of the work as demonstrated by its appeal to audiences of all days and generations.

M. Robert de Flurs, a member of the French Academy, tells us that Tartuffe is the darling of the French stage, having been played upon it more frequently than any of the other plays of Molière. This is because of the lesson it teaches which, according to M. Flurs, is "the crying need for common sense in the conduct of one's life."<sup>(4)</sup>

1. Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing; in reality they are ravaging wolves.

2. La Cabale des Dévots--Paris-1902

3. Molière et les Dévots--Paris-1914

4. Current Opinion, June, 1922



ad was in veritable oblivion, instantaneous system and hope  
(1)

to him sincere religion which is blind or nearly blind  
stood as equal in standing with false religion. He attacks  
the English woman and censures all religion, having in mind  
the time. Personal of religious play. Then he accuses the  
blind, foolish agents of the world, and finally the "blind"  
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self interest. A character of this type, says Schopenhauer,  
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been played upon it more frequently than any of the other plays  
of Molière. This is because of the lesson it teaches which,  
according to M. Vaux is "the crying need for common sense in  
the conduct of one's life." (3)

1. Remarks of false prophets who come to you in sheep's  
clothing; in reality they are tearing wolves.

2. La Cécile des Devoirs - Paris - 1802

3. Cécile et les Devoirs - Paris - 1814

4. Cécile's Religion, Rome, 1802



(1)

Brander Matthews in an article for Scribner's Magazine quotes Mr. John [Lord] Morley as saying, "The best title of Louis XIV to the recollection of posterity is the protection he extended to Molière, and one reason why this was so meritorious is that Molière's work had a markedly critical character in reference both to the devout and to the courtier. But Molière is only critical by accident. There is nothing organically negative about him, and his plays are the pure dramatic presentation of a peculiar civilization."

"Tartuffe" is a masterpiece because it is the highest type of comedy, cultured, witty and full of good sense. Above all it is a comedy of character involving persons as truly living for us to-day as for the Frenchman of the seventeenth century.

(2)

To quote Brander Matthews once more:- "Our Tartuffes do not masquerade as religious bigots; rather are they moral reformers damning the sins they have no mind to, reformers for revenue only; as dangerous to the public to-day as was Tartuffe in his time."

One fact remains from all these discussions, that the writing and presentation of "Tartuffe" was an event of considerable importance, the effect of which has endured for more than two centuries. In any case, those who were most violent in their condemnation of the play and those who stood by Molière in his struggles, agree to forget their differences in a just admiration of the work as a literary masterpiece.

Molière did not write for his own country alone, but for all civilization, and he was not for his own age alone but for all ages.

1. Scribners, June, 1910--Moliere and Louis XIV

2. Outlook, May 3, 1922- The Modernity of Moliere



11  
Benedict Matthews in an article for *Fortune* magazine  
quotes Matthews [John] as saying, "The best title of  
Louis XIV to the recollection of posterity is the protection  
he extended to Voltaire, and one reason why this was so worth  
recording is that Voltaire's work had a markedly critical char-  
acter in reference both to the devout and to the courtier.  
But Voltaire is only critical by accident. There is nothing  
essentially negative about him, and his plays are the pure  
dramatic presentation of a peculiar civilization."

"Voltaire" is a masterpiece because it is the highest  
type of comedy, witty, satirical, witty and full of good sense.  
Above all it is a comedy of character involving persons as  
truly living for us today as for the Frenchmen of the seven-  
teenth century.

(2)  
To quote Benedict Matthews once more: "Mr. Tardieu  
has not distinguished as religious writers; but in their moral  
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his civilization, and he was not for his own alone but  
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## Summary







On May 12, 1664, Jean Baptiste Poquelin, known to the stage as Molière, produced at Versailles the first three acts of "Le Tartuffe," the comedy destined to cause a controversy extending over many years.

Immediately after the performance the King, Louis XIV, influenced by people at court, issued an order forbidding further presentation of the play.

There followed a period of strife between Molière and the three religious factions of the time, the Jesuits, the Jansenists and the Cabale des Dévots. Each of these organizations brought forth arguments intended to prove that Molière was attacking them.

In vain did he plead that his comedy was simply a portrayal of the vice of hypocrisy in general. The religious enthusiasts not only accused him of attacking religion but even tried to prove that in the character of Tartuffe he was portraying particular individuals.

Molière in an effort to placate his enemies changed the character of the play, being careful to omit anything bordering on the religious or ecclesiastical. The controversy continued, however, and it was not until the fifth of February, 1669, that the entire play appeared in the form in which we have it to-day.

Opinions of great men vary on the matter of a premeditated attack upon any religious body. But all, from the very earliest critics down to our own day, recognize the literary value of the play and proclaim it Molière's masterpiece.



On May 10, 1886, John Galsworthy's "The  
Three Religions" was produced at the Lyric Theatre,  
and of "The Lyric" the comedy destined to cause a con-  
troversy extending over many years.

Immediately after the performance the Lyric Theatre  
was visited by people of every rank, and an order for the  
production of the play.

There followed a period of strife between Galsworthy and  
the three religious factions of the time, the Jesuits, the  
Protestants and the Catholics. Each of these groups  
intended to prove that their religion was the only true  
one was attacking them.

In vain did he plead that his comedy was simply a satir-  
cal study of the vice of hypocrisy in general. The religious  
authorities not only accused him of attacking religion but even  
tried to prove that in the character of Galsworthy he was por-  
traying something like a Jesuit.

Galsworthy in an effort to escape his enemies changed the  
character of the play, and was careful to omit anything that  
might be taken as religious or doctrinal. The controversy  
continued, however, and it was not until the fifth of Febru-  
ary, 1887, that the entire play appeared in the form in which  
we have it to-day.

Questions of great men vary on the matter of a promul-  
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mense value of the play and proclaim it Galsworthy's masterpiece.



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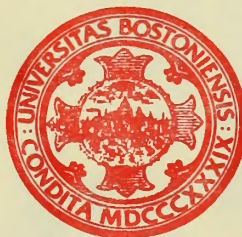
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